

COMPLETION RECRUITMENT

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Skill

COMPLETION SPECIALISTS
SHARE THEIR STRATEGIES FOR
ATTRACTING, DEVELOPING AND
RETAINING THE TALENTED
INDIVIDUALS THEY NEED TO
SUPPORT CURRENT AND
FUTURE DEMAND

Words by Marisa Garcia

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Business jet interior completion providers face challenges recruiting the specialised artisans and technicians they need. The competition for qualified staff within this niche industry has been tight for many years. Specialist skills take time to develop, and a high level of expertise and creativity is required.

“Our hardest positions to fill at this time have been cabinetry technicians and talented finish painters,” shares Heather Van Gorp, head of HR at Comlux Completion.

Curt Elikor, assistant manager of interiors at Duncan Aviation, points out that “each of our specialities – which

include cabinetry, finish, upholstery, completions, and so on – have their own unique challenges when it comes to finding suitable, experienced candidates.”

Giuseppe Rocca, director of finance and HR at AMAC Aerospace, emphasises the breadth of skills required: “Recruiting employees is critical for AMAC Aerospace because we cover a wide range of professions.”

Artisan skills are also prized outside the aviation industry. “Truly skilled artisans can find work anywhere and at extremely high rates; this has always been true,” notes Adam White, CEO of Comlux Completion.



“It takes good mentors, good skills and interesting projects to bring craftsmanship to the next level”

Lufthansa Technik recently handed over its third and final governmental A350 to the German Federal Ministry of Defense's Special Air Mission Wing

AR IN TRAINING

Lufthansa Technik's training programmes offer a mix of hands-on and classroom work, as well as mentoring in the workplace. The company utilises augmented reality within its maintenance and completion activities, for example for interior fit-checks, so this technology is integrated within its training initiatives, which Sonja Gritschke shares is becoming more of a draw. "We are more and more integrating 3D visualisation and virtual as well as augmented reality technologies – which have a huge appeal to our trainees and the way we do classroom training today," she says.

Artisans must also adapt to the rigorous standards and specialised nature of aviation. Sonja Gritschke, head of completion operations at Lufthansa Technik, says the company has focused on developing its talent: "It takes good mentors but also good skills and the right environment of interesting projects/products to bring craftsmanship to the next level."

CANDIDATE EXPECTATIONS
 With demand high, how to attract the top talent? Nowadays more people are attracted to alternative and remote work schedules. Completions require people on site, which makes it more critical to make the site attractive. Some employers report that modern recruits want more than a job; they seek engagement and alignment with their values. "To be competitive at not just attracting but retaining talent, you have to offer the right workspace, tooling, and most importantly, a team culture with a healthy backlog of work," says White of Comlux. "We have seen many returning employees excited about where Comlux is going; these folks have become our best recruiters". Elikor of Duncan Aviation also says the tools of the job can make a difference: "Candidates are really interested in the equipment they

will be working with and have an increased focus on technology, automated equipment, and innovation in processes and products." Traditional requirements are also addressed. "We have also evaluated our benefits packages and continue to do so, making improvements where needed with the goal of providing leading benefits regardless of the industry," says Elikor. "Recent package changes have included increased relocation packages, increased personal time, and a unique Employee Choice programme where team members choose their most desired potential benefits."

SUSTAINABILITY RECORD
 Others agree that a positive work environment and culture is crucial for retention. "Employees want to be involved in what is happening and be able to understand important decisions," says Rocchia of AMAC Aerospace. "Additionally, many applicants today place great value on a company's sustainability initiatives. They seek employers who are aware of their social and environmental responsibilities and actively take measures to promote sustainability. This includes environmentally friendly practices, ethical business practices, and a strong commitment

Scan for a video of a recent PC-12 refurbishment by Duncan Aviation, involving the effort of a wide range of artisans

THE *right* FIT

Duncan Aviation requires many specialists to support its work – with disciplines including upholstery, cabinetry, sewing, finishing, completions, removal/reinstallation, flooring, window shades and more. "Recruitment and proper onboarding and technical skills training are vital to Duncan Aviation's growth and future," says Curt Elikor. The company's approach is for new recruits to find their speciality, to "decrease the overall training time required and help team members more quickly master their required areas of expertise", Elikor adds. To support this the firm follows a Best Fit Focus methodology. "We focus on gaining a true understanding of each individual and what they would be most passionate about," says Elikor. "We see if they like custom work or repetition; if they are comfortable staying in one spot or moving around. We focus specifically on how their hobbies and past experiences directly relate to each interior position we have, along with other opportunities at the company that potentially may fit their skillset and be of interest. We then narrow down to what speciality would be the best fit. This encourages long-term careers and potential career paths and goals for team members."

to the community. A transparent and inclusive work environment that promotes continuous learning and professional development is also increasingly important for potential employees." Gritschke from Lufthansa Technik says sustainability and flexible working models are now more relevant for candidates. "Actively taking part in initiatives to reduce our industry's carbon footprint is therefore paramount to stay attractive for the younger generation," she says. "Our rather broad field of activities in this area – from various fuel-saving technologies to materials and even research on a potential future hydrogen-powered aviation industry – often pays off in this regard." Intending to create a pipeline of skilled workers ready to enter the industry, some

TOP RIGHT: A DUNCAN AVIATION SPECIALIST PREPARING FOAM FOR THE FIVE-AXIS CNC MACHINE
 INSET ABOVE: COMLUX COMPLETION EXPERTS WORKING IN PLATING, CNC MACHINING AND CABINETRY
 MAIN: A LUFTHANSA TECHNIK SPECIALIST APPLYING FINISH



COMPLETION RECRUITMENT

“It’s essential to take a long-term strategic approach”

companies develop partnerships with local government, community groups and educational institutions.

Duncan Aviation has made an effort to establish a hiring pool by getting youth excited about aviation career prospects. “We value making presentations at area high schools as well as area middle and elementary schools to plant seeds and begin teaching students about the possibilities,” says Elikor. “We have also increased our focus on diversification and work with minority groups and organisations to help them learn about potential careers with Duncan Aviation. We have increased and focused more on relationships with various regional technical schools and colleges and participated in more college classroom presentations and career fairs.”

Internships can help candidates develop needed skills. “We have expanded our summer internship programme to include potential team members from broader areas,” Elikor continues. “This year, we have nearly 60 interns working throughout our facilities. This is a great way to provide a trial run for both them and the company.”

Comlux collaborates with local government to develop staff with the right skills. “We recently worked extensively with the Indiana State government to sponsor training programmes,” says White. “It’s essential to take a long-term strategic approach to this current problem to ensure we aren’t continually faced with a shortage.”

Giuseppe Roccia says AMAC works to attract and retain top talent globally. “We partner with universities

and technical schools to create a pipeline of skilled graduates,” says Roccia. “We also offer ongoing training and mentoring programmes to ensure continuous professional development.”

By prioritising training, expanding recruitment networks, and aligning with evolving values, completion centres aim to be able to meet future demand. “With the rapid growth and expansion of facilities currently happening at Comlux, recruitment and training is one of the top priorities,” shares White. “It’s essential to take a long-term strategic approach to this current problem to ensure we aren’t continually faced with a shortage.”

ABOVE: A LUFTHANSA TECHNIK FINISHING SPECIALIST AT WORK

BELOW: AMAC AEROSPACE EXPERTS IN UPHOLSTERY AND CABINetry



HEAD-OF-STATE **B747-8i**

One of the upcoming projects for AMAC Aerospace’s artisans to get their teeth into is the refurbishment of a B747-8i operated by a head of state, with an expected downtime of approximately three years at the site in Basel, Switzerland.

The work entails a full refurbishment and some partial redesign of all zones. A variety

of design options were created by the in-house interior design department. The aircraft will also undergo A3, 1B, 2B, 1C and 3C maintenance checks.

Seating will be redesigned to improve comfort and reduce vibrations. In the medical theatre room, all medical equipment will be replaced. The aircraft will

also feature a new Ka-band satcom system (AMAC STC) and new CMS/IFE, among other things. On the upper deck, some seats will be removed to offer more space and reduce the cabin weight while improving functionality, the company shared.

AMAC Aerospace Basel currently has more than 30 aircraft undergoing maintenance or completion across its five hangars